

In front of this painting you think of nothing else,
and that is characteristic of a masterpiece: be exclusive; make any other
form of beauty
seem inferior.

Beautiful hills along the Arno from San Miniato to
those opposite the
Cascine. I am becoming more and more familiar with
their contours of
stern softness and their hues of green and gray.

On the edge of the Arno I like to observe at length
the powerful
wave made by the rolling water of the weir; the weir is
on an angle in
the river so that the water piles up rather on one side.
Against the wall
is a fold that hollows out the wall's edge; the water then
rolls over itself
like a propeller, forming a constant unmoving wave.
Wonderful to look
at that fixed form with a fleeting and fluid matter
always passing
through it. In the sea, on the contrary, a drop of water
remains motion-
less, or at least returns to its original place, and it's
merely the form of a
wave that moves forward.

A small lock on the side under an arch-shaped
projection forming
over the water a sort of balcony where I lean; a water
ladder, doubtless,
for small boats — and, depending on whether the lock is
open or closed,
the height of the river is modified.

The water is always yellow and clayey, but without
any bubbling,
any foam on the surface. It flows, swiftly at the weir,
on an almost
sharply inclined plane, smooth, without a snag, all of a
piece and regu-
lar. It glides.

Already the Arno has gone down considerably and
this morning the
mud-sifters reappeared—marsh workers who fill their
flat boats with
shovelfuls of silt dug up from the bottom or low shores
of the river.

The day before yesterday, toward the end of the
night, a violent
storm burst out. Squall, hail, dumbfounding flashes of
lightning and
deafening thunder — nothing was missing — not even the
full peal of the

pre-Christmas bells which ring out toward dawn,
desperately bewildered in the vast transport of the tempest, yet whose
sound seems angelic in the early morning,

I expected on awakening to find a sky of washed
azure; I see clouds
and more clouds — a dramatic sky of deluge.

Last year I didn't fully understand Fra Angelico; I
seemed to find in
him only a wholly pious, moral beauty, and his painting
seemed merely
a sort of means, the most efficacious possible, of
praying. The story of
Savonarola, which concerned me at that moment, struck
me as the story
of the "Iconoclast" in its most fearful aspects and I was
unwilling to ad-
mit that a work of art could have issued from the
convent of San Marco,
I must confess now that certain works of Fra Angelico
are delightful, To
be sure, he oversubordinated line to the form. The form
was a means of